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Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903
(607) 722-8801

October 27, 1986

His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate
630 Second Avenue
New York, New York 10016-4885

Dear Serbazan Hayr:

In conforming with the request of no less than one third of the dues-paying members of St. Gregory Armenian Church of Binghamton, New York, a special parish assembly meeting was held on October 26, 1986 at 6:30 P.M. in order to address the concern of the petitioners.

The minutes of that meeting and the official ballots are enclosed.

In keeping with the majority opinion of the Assembly, the parish council respectfully requests that the Very Rev. Father Sooren Chinchinian be relieved of his duties at this parish by you no later than December 31, 1986.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Father Khajag Barsamian for his patience, guidance, and time expended in my telephone conversations with him while you were in Armenia. I wanted to insure that the parish council acted responsibly and followed the proper procedures.

I will be calling the Diocese in order to set up an appointment for some of our parish council members to meet with you and Father Khajag within the next few weeks.

With warm personal regards,

Respectfully,

Dr. George P. Rejebian
George P. Rejebian

Enclosures: 8

ST. GREGORY ARMENIAN CHURCH
Binghamton, New York

Minutes of Special Parish Assembly

October 26, 1986 6:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order by the Parish Council Chairman Dr. George Rejebian. The opening prayer was given by Hayr Soorp Sooren Chinchinian.

Grace Baradet was nominated and seconded as Secretary Pro Tem. Dr. Vahe Garabedian was nominated and seconded as Chairman Pro Tem.

This special parish meeting was called by the parish council to discuss the status of whether our church is in a fiscal position to retain the services of a full time priest. The order of business is to consider that one issue. The chair will not entertain any other business at this time.

No objections were raised to the use of a tape recorder.

All the paid-up members who were present were asked to sign a roll call sheet and were handed their ballots.

The Chairman Pro Tem called the meeting to order about 6:45 P.M. Any major speakers were invited to speak. After them, any other speakers will be allowed to talk for a few minutes. It will only be fair to limit debate if there are to be a lot of speakers.

Dr. George Rejebian will make a presentation.

Ursula Findikyan said that they had no major speakers but that there would be several who would like to speak.

Dr. Garabed Fattal - Raised the point that the call for meeting does not exactly stipulate what the petitioners indicated and instead introduces the subject as it is written on the call for meeting in the letters that were sent.

Chair - The petitioner's request will be read as they have it:

"We the undersigned request a special meeting of the parish on (giving a specific date which was changed by mutual agreement) for the purpose of discussing the status of a full time priest."

The statement as was sent out on the meeting agenda is this:

"... discussing the status of whether the church is in a fiscal position to retain the services of a full time priest."

Dr. Michael Bogdasarian - In order to simplify the issue, I propose the following resolution:

"Whereas it is apparent that the church no longer has funds to support a full time priest and, whereas the existence of a church is central to the presence of the Armenian community, be it resolved that the parish council terminate the financial contract of the priest as of January 1, 1987".

The resolution was seconded by Diran Kradjian.

The Very Rev. Sooren Chinchinian stated that he had recently spoken to the Primate on the phone and that he said very clearly that the subject of the pastor is not a subject for discussion at this parish assembly. The right to remove or not to remove the pastor belongs to the Primate and the Diocesan Council and that he wanted me to go on record with this statement. Please make note of this.

Dr. M. Bogdasarian - As a point of order - the issue is not whether or not to remove the priest but of the financial status of the church.

Hayr Soorp - If you want to go ahead with your personal ideas, go ahead. I am quoting the Primate verbatim but you have the responsibility. I am emphasizing a legal point. The Primate is the supreme authority. If you defy the Primate, then this parish assembly should be dissolved.

Chair - The ultimate authority is the Primate's and the Diocesan Council however, an action can be initiated by this assembly. We can initiate it and forward the results to the Archbishop.

Hayr Soorp - You can discuss very freely the issue of having a resident pastor or not but you cannot set the date when the pastor will leave or will not leave. The Primate said this to me and I'm repeating it.

Chair - In clarifying a point to a question from the floor, the church by-laws state (Article 41): "That a priest of a parish is elected for a term of five years and may be re-elected. He may resign, or may be removed from office by the decision of the Primate and the Diocesan Council. A parish priest may be removed from his office also by a decision of the parish assembly, provided such decision is confirmed by the Primate and the Diocesan Council."

Carol Bogdasarian - One final point is that the parish has the total financial responsibility.

Michael Ketchoyian - I request an explanation of the finances of the church.

The Secretary Pro Tem re-read the resolution.

Chair - After a resolution has been stated by the chair, it belongs to the assembly. If you object to it, it will require 2/3 majority vote.

Question from the floor stated that the motion does not answer the request of the petitioners.

Chair - A request is on the floor to find out our financial situation. It would be proper for the treasurer to present his statement.

John Bogdasarian, Treasurer, presented the financial statement projected to December 31, 1986. (Copy attached)

Adrienne Kachadourian - In September and October of 1985, two major functions (the rug sale and the dance) raised approximately \$15,000. How was the money used?

John Bogdasarian - Part of the money was used for operating expenses and the rest went into the First Albany account to draw interest. Since the checking account is non-interest paying, any surplus money that is left, which will not be needed for a month or two, is put into that account to draw interest. The church by-law H states, "...to transfer at the end of every fiscal year, to the reserve fund, a part of the excess income over expenditures of preceding years as determined by the parish assembly."

Adrienne Kachadourian - If you need any money, do you take it out of the reserve funds?

John Bogdasarian replied that he did.

Nish Ketchoyian - Was the \$24,000 listed under income received in 1986?

John Bogdasarian replied negative.

Dr. Art Kachadourian - Is it true that, as a result of parish council's decision not to renew the priest's contract, pledge monies have not been received? How much pledge money is outstanding?

John Bogdasarian - In 1986, \$6,079.02 was received in pledges. That leaves an amount of \$1,200.00 to be collected as reported on the pledge statements. The \$3,000.00 in the financial statement includes \$1,200.00 outstanding. We get another \$300.00 a month from Sunday offerings. To that amount you add anticipated offerings and income from dinners. For example, in lieu of flowers for 1983 was \$6,280.00; in 1984 it was \$938.00; in 1985 it was \$365.00, and in 1986 it was \$85.00.

Jane Yerko - I am willing to increase my pledge if that is what will help to keep the priest.

Chair - Anyone can increase their pledge but it is not the time to discuss this. This meeting is only to discuss the issue of the special assembly as stated.

Ursula Findikyan - Raised a point of issue as to why there is money in an account which earns no interest.

J. Bogdasarian - The Marine Midland checking account does not earn interest because the bank will not allow this kind of organization to earn interest on checking accounts. All the other accounts bear interest.

Louise Kontos - I would like to know what monies were pledged at the end of 1985 and what pledges are anticipated in 1986?

John Bogdasarian - At the assembly meeting in December 1985, those figures were presented in the budget and approved. In 1986, we wanted to get pledges for 50% of the budget which is \$40,265.00. We needed \$20,000.00 and we received \$6,079.02.

George Sarkisian - We need to discuss the original issue and not get carried away by playing around with the numbers.

Parish Council Chairman Dr. George Rejebian addressed the issues of finance because it is the prime issue. He stated that our church has been in a deficit budget for the last three or four years. In other words, we are spending more money than we receive.

He then read a letter from Hayr Soorp Chinchinian dated November 6, 1984 in which Hayr Soorp acknowledged that the time had come to leave our church because of the diminishing financial situation. (Copy attached) One month later his letter was acknowledged by the parish council and wishing him well in his future endeavors.

In the parish council chairman's 1986 annual report, dated December 1985, it was noted that a mutual commitment to stay on until the end of 1986 was agreed upon.

Dr. Rejebian stated that we had hoped that an arrangement could have been made to share Hayr Soorp with Syracuse. We tried very hard but it didn't work out. Our finances were dictating a move in this direction. The report further stated that " In March of 1985, your parish council met with Serpazan and the parish councils of Syracuse at Niagara Falls at a regional meeting. We were unable to resolve this matter. In fact, Syracuse, Rochester, and Niagara Falls made

other arrangements to share a priest so we were not able to attain financial relief as we had done in previous years when Hayr Soorp visited Syracuse once a month."

Also, parish council and Hayr Soorp mutually agreed to honor the commitment to each other to the end of 1986. In a spirit of cooperation, we would try to find another economic alternative and Hayr Soorp would have time to relocate. If Hayr Soorp wished to move before the end of the year, we would discuss it and work it out.

A letter from Dr. Art Kachadourian to Hayr Soorp dated February 6, 1986 was read which stated that, since the parish had begun a new fiscal year, the parish reaffirmed the commitment that our agreement terminate at the end of 1986 because of financial conditions. (Copy attached)

The Chairman further stated that "parish council wants to let you know that this is no sudden decision. It has been coming on but no one has tackled the problem. The church doors will not close regardless of whether the Hayr Soorp stays or not. This church has been in existence for 60 years and will be here in the future."

Gus Kerjilian - Request was made to terminate the resolution and see if we can get more pledges. If it is a financial situation, what would it take to keep the priest for another year for the sake of the community, the children and the church.

Chair - Since the resolution was made and seconded, we cannot discuss this question at this meeting. This meeting was called by the petitioners for a specific issue and this is not the time to solicit pledges.

Parsek Kachadourian - Speaking in Armenian, he said that a few in the parish were elderly and ill and would need a priest. How much would it cost to bring a priest and why wasn't there the money.

Nish Ketchoyian - Restated that the Hayr Soorp said that it was up to the Archbishop as to when the priest leaves. What are we going to do if we can't pay him?

Dr. A. Kachadourian - He felt that the motion on the floor has nothing to do with the petition and wants the parish assembly to direct the parish council to maintain a permanent priest.

Chairman Pro Tem read a letter sent to the parish council by the petitioners after the agenda had been mailed. This point was deemed to be out of order by the chair.

Dr. M Bogdasarian - Point of Information - We can only discuss the resolution on the floor.

Question was asked what we were going to do if the Archbishop decided not to move Father Sooren.

Hayr Soorp reiterated that parish council or the assembly cannot set the date of the priest's departure. You can make the decision on the basis of the the by-laws but the date is up to the Archbishop and the Diocesan Council. He stated that he would not stay against the will of the people or if there is a deficit.

It was pointed out that the resolution is only suggesting a date.

Marion Rejebian - The working of the agenda was decided by the majority of the parish council. Why are we out of order?

Chair - The assembly is not out of order, but some points brought out in this discussion are out of order. The assembly was duly called by the petitioners. The by-laws have been followed.

Dr. Garabed Fattal - I need clarification on the wording of the resolution.

Dr. M. Bogdasarian - The resolution is worded deliberately. The "presence" is essential to this resolution. The church will not be closed because of financial need.

Ursula Findikyan requested a definition of church.

Chair pointed out that she was out of order .

Michael Ketchoyian - Our church (in Binghamton) was in existence for over 60 years and we have had a priest for only 14 years. We managed to continue our activities for 26 years. This doesn 't mean we are closing our doors.

George Sarkisian - The church means the building on Corbett Ave.

Dr. George Rejebian - We are getting off the point. What the Hayr Soorp is saying is correct in that we cannot set the date of his departure. The parish has to make a decision on the date and we request and give a guideline to the Archbishop. The parish decides whether we can or cannot keep a priest.

Secretary Pro Tem read the resolution again in response to a question that was called.

Dr. A. Kachadourian - Wanted to know the agenda of this meeting.

Chair - The agenda was mailed to everyone and there is only one order of business.

Dr. George Rejebian - I read the agenda two days ago to the Vicar and was told that it was okay. He only stipulated that we must read

the petition as it was submitted. We have met all the requirements of the diocese.

It was noted that the ballot was not worded correctly and that there was a contradiction between the statement on the ballot and the resolution. It was decided to either cross off the statement at the top of the ballot or issue new ones.

The resolution was read again by Dr. George Rejebian. A YES vote means to terminate the priest's contract as of 12/31/86 or 1/1/87. A NO vote means not to terminate his contract.

The roll will be called and everyone will come up to the table and deposit his or her ballot in the box as their name is checked off.

The resolution was read again by Dr. George Rejebian.

Dr. Michael Bogdasarian - Point of order - A call for question must follow parliamentary procedure. The meeting must be called back to order and signify by raise of hands to vote on the resolution proposed. It is not open for question. It must be seconded and voted upon immediately.

Call to question - that is to vote on this resolution - is made and seconded. All in favor to vote on the question at this time signify by raising of hands.

Count of hands showed 36 votes. Motion to vote is carried.

The resolution was explained again and read and what voting yes or no means.

Roll was called by Jack Injajigian. Fifty-four ballots had been given out.

Dr. Art Kachadourian and Deran Kradjian counted the ballots. The ballot count was as follows: (original ballots enclosed)

YES votes	--	32
NO votes	--	<u>22</u>
Total votes		54

Louise Kontos - Felt that the right of the petition was not met, and that their request and the agenda of the meeting disagreed.

Chair - The Resolution is carried by majority vote.

Motion was made for adjournment and seconded.

Respectfully submitted,
Grace S. Baradet
Grace S. Baradet
Secretary Pro Tem

Special Assembly Meeting October 26, 1986

Report ending October 1986

Cash Balance Projected to December 31, 1986

December 31, 1985

First Albany Account	31,948.70
Marine Midland Checking Account	6,198.66
Binghamton Savings Bank	281.85

* Total 38,429.21

October 30, 1986

First Albany Account	18,130.30
Marine Midland Checking Account	1,764.00

19,894.30

October 30 Loss to date 18,253.06

Anticipated November, December Expenditures 6,079.02

Anticipated November, December Income 3,000.00

Two months loss (3,079.02)

* 1986 Yearly loss (21,332.08)

** Anticipated cash on hand December 31, 1986 17,097.12

1986 Budget 40,265.00

1987 Budget will be higher

Short fall is minimum of 24,000.00
leaving no reserves

John M. Bogdasarian
Parish Council
Treasurer

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Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903
(607) 722-8801

November 6, 1984

Dr. George Rejebian
Chairman of the Parish Council
30 Larchmont Road
Binghamton, N. Y. 13903

Dear Dr. George,

Owing to the financial difficulties and the diminishing membership our church is experiencing as well as the fact that I served in this parish quite longer than we had previously agreed on, I feel strongly that the time has come for me to leave this parish. Therefore, I am asking the Primate to make an arrangement so that I can be transferred to another church. I will continue to carry out my responsibilities pending the arrangement of the Primate.

I would like to thank you in particular, and the members of the Parish Council in general for the cooperation, understanding and kindness which you showed to me so graciously during the past four and a half years of my pastorate. I wish you every success in your future endeavors.

Prayerfully yours
Fr. Sooren Chinchinian
Fr. Sooren Chinchinian
Pastor

Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church

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12 CORBETT AVE.
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903
(607) 722-8801

February 6, 1986

Very Reverend Sooren Chinchinian
St. Gregory Armenian Church
12 Corbett Avenue
Binghamton, NY 13903

Dear Hyr Soorp:

Since the parish will begin a new fiscal year shortly, the Parish Council wishes to reaffirm its commitment to you. In May, 1985, we stated that the parish would provide for a priest until December, 1986 and that our agreement terminates at that time.

As you are aware, the rising cost appears to be the primary reason for our limited time arrangement. With the coming new year, our expenses will surely rise and this has become the major factor for our concern.

This is brought to your attention at this time so that you will have ample opportunity and time to consider a change, if you so desire. The Parish Council feels that if you wish to leave sooner as a result of an available opportunity, then we could discuss an early departure. This understanding also gives Parish Council the privilege of seeking a replacement for your position.

Sincerely,

A. Kachadourian, M.D.
Corresponding Secretary

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cc: His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian

Dr. George Rejebian

Special Parish Assembly
October 26, 1986

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Cash Balance projected to Dec 31, 1986

Dec 31, 1985 Cash Balance:

First Albany Account	31,948.70
Marine Midland Bank	6,198.66
Binghamton Savings Bank	<u>281.85</u>

*

Total 38,429.21

Oct 30, 1986 Cash Balance

First Albany Account	18,130.30
Marine Midland Bank	1,764.00
Binghamton Savings Bank	<u>281.85</u>

Balance on hand 20,176.15

Oct 30, 1986 Loss to date 18,253.06

Anticipated Nov./Dec. Expenditures 6,079.02

Projected Nov./Dec. Income 3,000.00

2 Months loss (3,079.02)

*

1986 Yearly loss (21,332.08)

**

Anticipated cash on hand Dec 31, 86 17,097.12

1986 Budget 40,265⁰⁰

A similar 1987 budget will deplete all cash reserves on hand with a minimum short fall of 24,000.

John M. Bogdasarian
Treasurer